

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, LA, VN, TH

SUBJ: MFA SPOKESMAN ON NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS AND THAI/LAO
RELATIONS

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN PRACHA KHUNAKASEM
HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 10. FOLLOWING IS AN
UNOFFICIAL USIS TRANSLATION OF HIS REMARKS ON NORTH
VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS AND THAI/LAO RELATIONS:

PRACHA: ANOTHER SUBJECT I WISH TO SPEAK OF IS IN
REGARD TO A REPORT PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS, A REPORT
QUOTING A STATEMENT MADE BY PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA THAT
THERE ARE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS REMAINING IN LAOS AND
REQUESTING FOR NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS TO BE
WITHDRAWN. THIS STATEMENT MADE BY THE LAO PREMIER
HIMSELF CONFIRMS THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS STILL REMAIN
IN LAOS. MY PERSONAL VIEW IS THAT NOBODY CAN BE BETTER
INFORMED OF THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF LAOS THAN THE LAO
PREMIER. IT IS A FACT THAT HIS REQUEST IS JUST AND
PROPER, BECAUSE UNDER THE PARIS AGREEMENT WHEN A
COALITION GOVERNMENT IS SET UP, ALL SIDES MUST WITHDRAW
ALL FOREIGN FORCES COMPLETELY FROM LAOS WITHIN 60 DAYS.
THEREFORE SINCE ALL OTHER SIDES HAVE WITHDRAWN FOREIGN TROOPS
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ALREADY, NORTH VIETNAM OUGHT TO WITHDRAW ITS TROOPS ALSO.

THEREFORE, WE SUPPORT THIS DEMAND MADE BY PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA IN ORDER TO MAKE LAOS REALLY NEUTRAL. IT IS THE DESIRE OF THAILAND ALSO FOR LAOS TO BE REALLY NEUTRAL AND FREE FROM INTERFERENCE FROM OUTSIDE.

REPORTER: WILL WE ENDEAVOR TO MAKE THAILAND AND LAOS AS CLOSE AND INTIMATE AS THEY WERE IN THE PAST, BEFORE THE LATTER HAD A COALITION GOVERNMENT?

PRACHA: WE ARE MAKING MOVES IN VARIOUS WAYS, SUCH AS TAKING UP THE MATTER OF THE ETO FOR CONSIDERATION. LAOS IS IN A SOMEWHAT DISADVANTAGEOUS POSITION BECAUSE IT IS A COUNTRY WHICH IS LANDLOCKED WITH NO SEACOAST. ALL TRANSPORTATION HAS TO PASS THROUGH OTHER COUNTRIES, MAINLY THAILAND AT PRESENT. IT DEPENDS MAINLY ON OUR SERVICES FOR THE TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS IT IMPORTS AND THAT IT EXPORTS, THEREFORE WE ARE CONSIDERING WAYS TO HELP FACILITATE TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS IN A MORE ORDERLY MANNER.

REPORTER: A NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED A NEWS REPORT YESTERDAY WHICH STATED THAT THAILAND ALLOWS AMERICAN U-2 AIRCRAFT TO MAKE PATROL FLIGHTS OVER LAOS. DOESN'T THAT CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION?

PRACHA: PLEASE GO AND PUT QUESTIONS ON MILITARY AFFAIRS TO GENERAL KRIANGSAK. I DID NOT EVEN KNOW THAT THERE WERE U-2 AIRCRAFT BASED IN UTAPAO. BUT AMERICAN MILITARY FORECES WHICH ARE STATIONED HERE ARE FRIENDS OF THAILAND, BUT NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS ARE NOT FRIENDS OF LAOS. THAT IS THE DIFFERENCE.

WE WANT THAILAND AND LAOS TO CONTINUE BEING CLOSE FRIENDS, BECAUSE WE ARE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WITH A COMMON BORDER, WITH THE MEKONG RIVER ONLY SEPARATING US. WE WANT OUR RELATIONS WITH EVERY AND ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES TO BE THE BEST POSSIBLE, FOR THE SECURITY OF THAILAND ITSELF, AS WELL AS IN OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS.

REPORTER: THROUGH WHO WILL TALKS AND CONSULTATIONS, AS WELL AS EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BE HELD?
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PRACHA: AT DIPLOMATIC LEVELS--BETWEEN OUR AMBASSADOR AND THE LAO GOVERNMENT, AND BETWEEN THE LAO AMBASSADOR AND OU GOVERNMENT. PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA HAS VISITED THAILAND SEVERAL TIMES, AND WHENEVER HE WENT TO PARIS OR TO NEW YORK, HE WAS APT TO CHANGE PLANS HERE AND WE INVITED HIM TO STOP OVER IN OUR COUNTRY ANY TIME.
KINTNER

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